

**Minutes of the
Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program
Coordinating Committee**

**May 20, 2026
Quarterly Meeting**

Edina, MN

Sabrina Chandler of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. on May 20, 2026. Other UMRR Coordinating Committee representatives present were Kelly Keefe (USACE), Jim Fischer (USGS), Chad Craycraft (Illinois DNR), Kirk Hansen (Iowa DNR), Liz Scherber (Minnesota DNR), Sam Clary (Missouri DoC) on behalf of Matt Vitello, and Wade Strickland (Wisconsin DNR) on behalf of Vanessa Perry. A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Minutes of the February 25, 2026 Meeting

Chad Craycraft moved and Kirk Hansen seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the February 25, 2026, meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Regional Management and Partnership Collaboration

FY 2026 Work Plan

Marshall Plumley shared optimism for UMRR in FY 2026 and thanked partners for their trust and dedication to the work.

The FY 2026 funding outcome is a dramatic improvement for the program from FY 2025, with \$53 million appropriated to UMRR. Under this work plan, the St. Paul and St. Louis Districts may both have new project starts and LTRM base monitoring will be fully funded. The immediate work interruption following the FY 2025 work plan continues to affect the implementation of UMRR habitat rehabilitation and enhancement projects (HREPs).

FY 2027 President's Budget

Plumley noted that UMRR was one of only four USACE aquatic ecosystem projects to be included in the FY 2027 President's Budget. In the FY 2027 USACE Budget, the Administration creates a standalone District Salaries and Expenses Account (S&E Account), separating Division and District personnel expenses from direct project costs. For UMRR, the Administration is recommending \$55,487,000 for UMRR direct project costs and an additional \$4,020,000 million for salary and overhead expenses in FY 2027. Plumley highlighted that this is the highest budget recommendation ever for the program.

In response to questions from Kirsten Wallace and Sabrina Chandler, Plumley stated that he believes that UMRR will be limited to \$4.02 million for salaries in FY 2027 but noted that a lot of uncertainty remains. The FY 2027 Budget allocates most of UMRR's project dollars to construction; there is no funding allocated to ongoing feasibility work.

Plumley concluded by stating that a \$59 million total budget for the program is a powerful statement about the strength and quality of the partnership's work.

Strategic Planning

Before May 2025, the program made significant progress on the strategic plan. The Strategic Planning Leadership Team (SPLT) met recently and will be resolving some comments provided by the Communication and Outreach Team (COT) and Analysis Team (A-Team), as well as stakeholders and nongovernmental organizations that shared resources at the beginning of the strategic planning process. Plumley acknowledged the program has lost a year of the strategic plan's implementation timeframe. Jim Fischer and Liz Scherber noted that the draft strategic plan has been a helpful resource over the past year despite not being finalized.

The SPLT will revise the strategic plan in June. A webinar will be held in July to kick off a 30-day public review process. The UMRR Coordinating Committee will receive the document with public comments at the August quarterly meeting, with an opportunity to endorse the final product at the October quarterly meeting.

In response to a question from Sammi Boyd, Plumley explained that the stakeholder review will involve sharing the draft strategic plan document on the UMRR website, disseminating a request for input via UMRR's email distribution list, and publishing a press release to encourage any input from interested stakeholders on the draft strategic plan.

LTRM Low Funding Scenario Planning After Action Review

Plumley explained that the partnership has been having conversations over the past year about the impacts of low funding and funding uncertainty on implementing LTRM. While the program was able to maintain base monitoring in FY 2025, it was limited in the carryover dollars that are normally available to ensure there is no pause in operations between fiscal years.

There will be an after action review (AAR) conducted on this LTRM low funding scenario planning process, involving the Coordinating Committee and LTRM field station leads. A meeting is scheduled for May 27 to scope the process. Plumley views this as an opportunity to improve the program's response to future situations.

In response to a question from Olivia Dorothy, Plumley stated that the AAR's findings will be provided at a future quarterly meeting.

LTRM Future Discussions

Plumley stated his intent to find opportunities to further educate the partnership on LTRM work and operations. Plumley noted that the LTRM low funding scenario planning process was inhibited by the differing levels of understanding participants had on LTRM. Future quarterly meetings could include a component of LTRM education.

Jim Fischer noted that LTRM has been in operation for over forty years thanks to the efficient work of states, field stations, and the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center (UMESC); that work is dependent on a continual flow of both money and staff, both of which were interrupted in FY 2025.

Kirsten Wallace noted that any future onboarding materials created for the program could capture the information shared on LTRM in these quarterly meeting components.

Program Reports

HREP Planning and Construction

John Henderson, Marshall Plumley, and Shane Simmons reported on the progress in implementing UMRR HREPs, including the following milestones:

- The St. Paul District has kicked off planning for the Bankline Stabilization HREP and will be holding an interagency meeting on May 22.
- The St. Paul District is wrapping up construction on the McGregor Lake HREP Stage 2 and will hold a ribbon cutting on September 22.
- The Rock Island District will hold a kickoff meeting for the Lower Pool 11 HREP planning process in August.
- The Rock Island District is in negotiations to find a new sponsor for the Quincy Bay HREP.
- The St. Louis District expects to complete Stage 1 of the Yorkinut Slough HREP design in November.
- The RRAT barge trip is scheduled for July 14-16.

Long Term Resource Monitoring, Research, and Other Science

USACE Update

Marshall Plumley reiterated that LTRM base monitoring is fully funded for FY 2026 at \$7 million. That money is on its way to USGS. The scope of work for Science in Support of Restoration and Management (SSRM) was drafted and approved in May, which will bring the LTRM total funding in FY 2026 of \$9 million. While some SSRM work was delayed in FY 2025, it is starting to resume.

Quarterly Progress Report

Jim Fischer reported that the accomplishments of the second quarter of FY 2026 include the publication of the following manuscripts that were supported by UMRR funding and the partnership infrastructure:

- 1) Reforesting Upper Mississippi River Floodplain Openings Colonized by Invasive Species
- 2) Seasonal Environmental Conditions and River Morphology Shape Summer Phytoplankton Communities

Fischer reported that the UMESC Water Quality Analytical Lab participated in the USGS's annual interlaboratory comparison. Fischer presented on the results, which underscore the high quality and accuracy of the sampling data.

Fischer mentioned that the 2026 National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration in Omaha, Nebraska included two special sessions on UMRR.

Analysis Team Update

Shawn Giblin reported on the Analysis Team's April 22 meeting. The next meeting will be on July 30.

Showcase

Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program Project Soil Analyses

Aaron McFarlane reported results from soil analyses conducted at roughly three hundred plots across several UMRR HREPs. Soil properties can confirm if forest restoration efforts are on the right path. The study compared soil samples from completed restoration sites, restoration sites in development, and historical dredged material placement sites and compared these samples with soil samples from natural reference (control) sites.

Important factors for healthy soil at restoration sites include hydrology, inundation; sediment characteristics, soil compaction; the construction techniques used at the site; any plantings done at the site; and the placement of historic dredged material.

The study found that the amount of organic matter in the soil samples from natural sites was typically double that of soil samples from restoration sites. Organic matter is an important component in soil as it reduces bulk density, holds in water, and is a source of nutrients. McFarlane's recommendations resulting from the study are to consider ways to add organic matter to soil at restoration sites, and to be mindful of soil compaction. McFarlane is hoping to do a large-scale analysis of 2025 sampling data this fiscal year to inform the HREP Design Handbook.

Towards an Integrated Framework for Floodplain Vegetation Monitoring and Research in the UMRS

Matt Trumper shared insights from an effort to create a framework for long-term floodplain vegetation monitoring in the Upper Mississippi River System. Both UMRR and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) are conducting significant floodplain vegetation work. Trumper's team wanted to develop a conceptual framework for floodplain vegetation, with a hierarchical approach to monitoring (site- regional- and system-scale monitoring) integrated through research and modelling. This effort would link data that already exists with management actions. Trumper noted that coordination is key for the team moving forward, as the data and interagency partnerships needed already exist.

Other Business

Future Meeting Schedule

- August 2026 to be held in St. Louis, Missouri
 - UMRBA quarterly meeting – August 4
 - UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – August 5
- October 2026 to be held in the Quad Cities

- UMRBA quarterly meeting – October 13
- UMRB Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – October 14

— February 2027 to be held virtually

- UMRBA quarterly meeting – February 16
- UMRB Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – February 17

Attendance List

UMRR Coordinating Committee Members

Kelly Keefe	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Jim Fischer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC [on behalf of Jon Amberg]
Chad Craycraft	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Kirk Hansen	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Liz Scherber	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Sam Clary	Missouri Department of Conservation [on behalf of Matt Vitello]
Wade Strickland	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources [on behalf of Vanessa Perry]

Others In Attendance

Jim Cole	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Samantha Thompson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Trevor Cyphers	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Kacie Grupa	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
John Henderson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Aaron McFarlane	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Dan Reburn	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Davi Michl	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Shane Simmons	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Greg Kohler	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Johnson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jared Schmalstieg	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Lauren Larson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Matt Mangan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Kraig McPeck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Sara Schmuecker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
Kristen Bouska	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennifer Dieck	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Matt Trumper	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Neil Rude	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Sammi Boyd	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Shawn Giblin	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Alicia Vasto	Audubon
Andrew Stephenson	The Nature Conservancy
Olivia Dorothy	One Mississippi
Ken Lubinski	One Mississippi
Aaron Field	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Brian Stenquist	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Natalie Lenzen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Tyler Leske	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Sadie Neuman	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Laura Talbert	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Josh Wolf	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

